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Warren Report Critics Draw Fire

There is no doubt that the movement for a new inquiry into the assassination of John F. Kennedy is gaining momentum; and the reopening of the Jack Ruby case is obviously going to increase the clamor.

The action of the Texas Court of Appeals, in setting aside the conviction of Lee Oswald's slayer, comes at a critical moment, for it simply climaxes a series of actions about the Warren Report, and undermined confidence in its findings.

The danger now is that this uneasy, doubting sentiment may become so contagious that the government will feel compelled to plunge into a new investigation without sober consideration of what is involved.

The recent poll showing that the American people reject, by a 3-to-2 margin, the "main thrust" of the Warren Report, has made a marked impression on Congress. The finding that a majority of the people doubt that the assassination was the work of one man, and tend to believe the killing was part of a larger plot, has definitely quickened interest in a whole new review.

From the first, of course, many people here and abroad (especially Europe) have rejected the official, generally accepted explanation, but the new Harris poll shows how

this suspicion has suddenly swelled in the wake of a recent wave of books attacking the Warren Report.

Heretofore, the doubters had only their instincts to rely on, but they have now been fortified by a series of private postmortems, which both challenge the official verdict and attempt to show that there must have been a conspiracy.

Rep. Ted Kupferman, R-N.Y., already has introduced a resolution calling for a joint congressional committee to re-examine the case with a view to launching a new legislative investigation. The proposal is gaining wide editorial support.

Nevertheless, it will be a disservice to the nation if Congress is stampeded into some action without carefully weighing the substance of the attacks on the Warren Commission that have been receiving so much uncritical publicity.

It must be kept in mind that these books not only question the judgement and conscientiousness of the Warren Commission, but, by insinuation and innuendo, its integrity as well.

We are asked to believe that a panel composed of Chief Justice Earl Warren, Allen Dulles, John McCloy, Senators Richard Russell and John Sherman Cooper, Reps. Hale Boggs and Gerald Ford, would deliberately ignore the evi-

dence to arrive at a political verdict.

We are further asked to believe that three distinguished doctors, who performed the autopsy in the presence of many others, would conspire with the commission by forging a false postmortem on the shooting.

The critics are now demanding a new inquiry "by some completely unprejudiced and fearless body." Just where, Congress should ask itself, could a more trustworthy group of men be found than the members of the Warren Commission, all of whom have given the country years of devoted service?

Also, before reopening the deep wound of the assassination, Congress should satisfy itself that there is enough new and significant evidence to justify so agonizing a step.

Up until recently the critics had the field to themselves, because the commission and its staff were reluctant to dignify and further publicize the attacks by answering them, but now they are beginning to fire back.

Arlen Specter, a key member of the commission's legal staff, and now the district attorney of Philadelphia, flatly says, "There has not been a scintilla of new evidence disclosed in any of the books." Is this so, or isn't it? So far the critics have not rebutted this rebuttal.

Ford and Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, say they are in "complete agreement" that no "new information has been produced which could reasonably cast any doubts upon the findings or conclusions" of the commission.

"If they have found another assassin," adds Dulles, "let them name names and produce the evidence." This would not seem to be an unreasonable proposal; it is one that Congress should give due weight to.

Finally, a great "mystery" has been made over the whereabouts of the X-rays and photographs that were made of the autopsy, but which were not included in the Warren Report because they were regarded as merely corroborative of the exhaustive testimony of the doctors who performed the autopsy.

Actually, there is no mystery at all. The X-rays and photos are in the possession of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, and if there is ever a legitimate need for them in the future they will be available.

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